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OXFORD LECTURES  
ON  
ELOCUTION  
BY  
CHARLES JOHN PLUMPTRE



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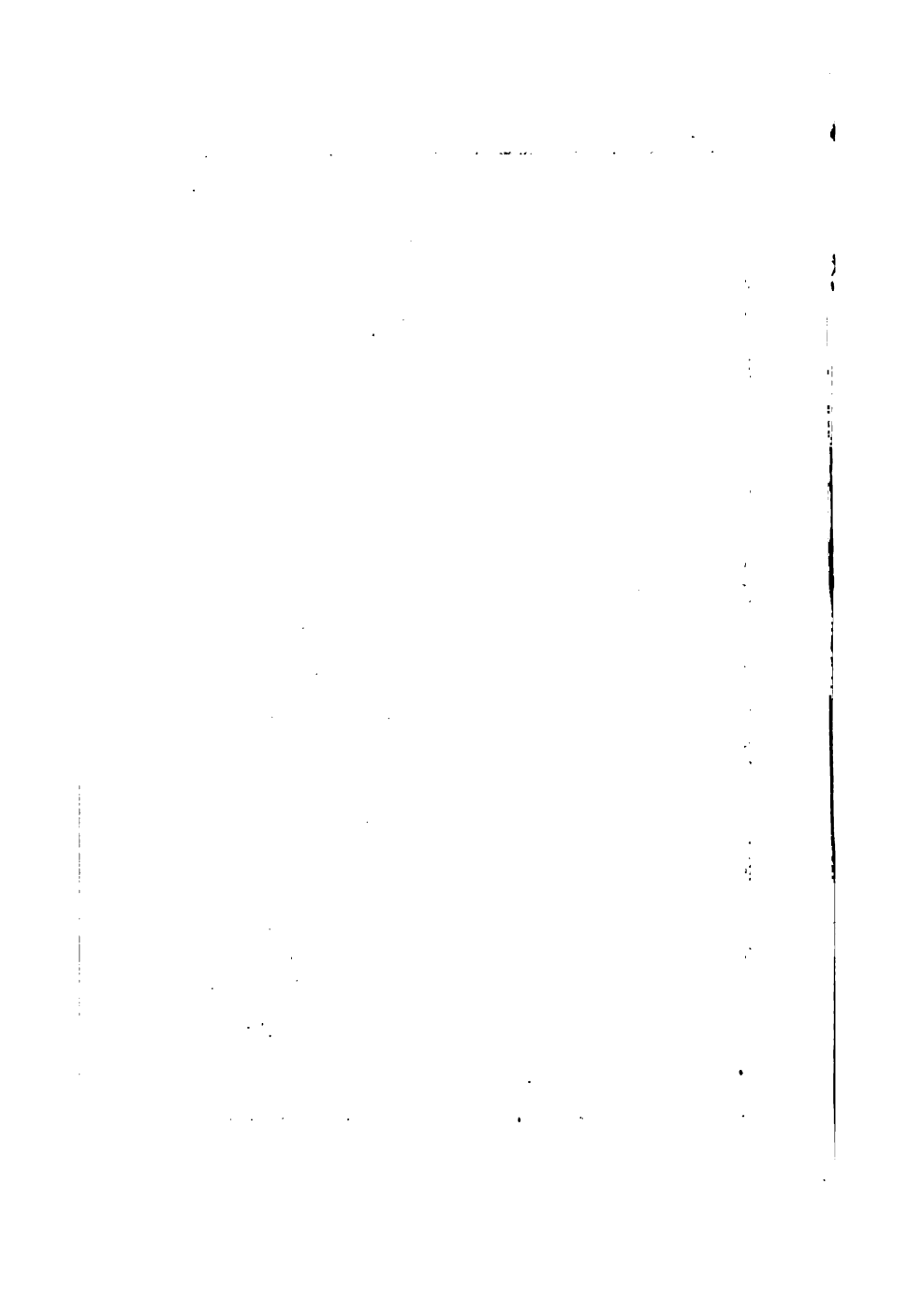
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THE  
Principles and Practice  
OF  
Elocution.



THE  
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE  
OF  
ELOCUTION,  
CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO THE VARIOUS  
PROFESSIONS:

BEING  
THE SUBSTANCE OF A COURSE OF INTRODUCTORY  
LECTURES DELIVERED AT OXFORD,

BY PERMISSION OF THE REV. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR,

DURING

MICHAELMAS TERM, 1860.

BY

CHARLES JOHN PLUMPTRE.

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"ARS OELARE ARTEM."

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1861.







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TO THE  
RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD,  
LORD HIGH ALMONER TO THE QUEEN, AND CHANCELLOR OF  
THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER,

*The following Lectures*  
ON THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF ELOCUTION  
ARE, WITH HIS LORDSHIP'S PERMISSION,  
MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
BY HIS OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,  
CHARLES JOHN PLUMPTRE.



## PREFACE.

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IN the last of a course of six lectures on the Church of England, delivered by the Rev. Hugh McNeile, D.D., just twenty years ago, at the Hanover-square Rooms, occurs the following passage in reference to clerical training:—"We are exhorted by an apostle to make *full proof* of our ministry, and reminded that we are debtors, not to the Greek only, but to the barbarian also: to the wise and to the unwise. But here is the difficulty. In order to rouse the careless, and interest the unwilling, energetic measures and words are indispensable. But in the exercise of energy there is a liability to forget gracefulness, and thus expose the effort made for one part of the population to the ridicule of another. Such ridicule is carefully to be avoided, not on account of the clergyman ridiculed, (*he* may easily bear it) but on account of the people, who are thus supplied with a handle, or at least what is frequently used as a handle, against religion. It is not enough to say that this is unreasonable in them:

we must avoid, as far as lieth in us, even the appearance of evil, and endeavour if possible to silence prejudice as well as satisfy reason. To be at once energetic and graceful demands much strength, and much self-possession, and much practice, and much knowledge; knowledge not of books only, but of men also . . . . The age demands talent in every department, and while we most cordially agree in the opinion lately expressed in his place in Parliament by one of her Majesty's ministers, that the clergy of the Church should not be supported merely because they are 'popular, eloquent, and plausible preachers,' we cannot but feel at the same time that if unwillingness on the part of the outstanding population be a good practical argument in favour of endowments for the Church, it is equally so for the highest possible cultivation of what shall be popularly effective in the minister.

"No one who has given even a passing attention to the habits and feelings of our people can doubt of the immense effect of a ready and natural elocution: yet how little attention is paid to a right training for its

acquisition! Looking at the ministrations of the Church practically and in detail; following them from the pulpit to the school-room, from the catechetical lecture to the chamber of sickness, from the instruction and consolation of the dying poor to the kind but dignified reproof of the careless and frequently half-intoxicated bystanders, from the abode of squalid misery to the parlour of worldly-minded avarice, fortified by incipient, perhaps confirmed, scepticism; from all these, to the platform for the propagation of Christian knowledge, or the exposure of anti-Christian error;—in whatever department of his labours you contemplate the minister of the Church, *it would be difficult to estimate the advantage that might, under the divine blessing, be derived from Elocution classes in our Universities*, where under the management of competent professors, our young men might be trained in recitation, both of selections from standard authors and of their own compositions on set subjects . . . Instead of superseding any part of the present process, this might be added to it all; and if candidates for Orders were

thereby delayed a year, there would be more than compensation for the delay in the increased competency for the work."

The ideas thus forcibly put forth by the eloquent divine who, in his own person, affords a striking example of great natural powers of oratory developed and cultivated by elocutionary study and practice to the highest degree of perfection, must have been more or less felt by thousands—laymen as well as clergymen—who have at all considered the subject in any of its many forms and phases. No one can look around him, indeed, without being impressed with their truth and importance. Earnestly do I hope that the time is at hand when the national reproach of not having a regular system of training in the arts (to the Church and the Bar the all-important arts) of public reading and speaking, at our Universities, as suggested, not alone by the preacher whom I have quoted, but by many eminent thinkers and writers during the last twenty years, may be removed from amongst us; and that ere long a regular Professorship of Elocution may be found attached not only to our great

Universities, but to all Theological and Collegiate Institutions throughout the country.

I cannot conclude without saying a word or two by way of personal explanation in reference to the motive which induced me to open Elocution classes last term at the University of Oxford. Encouraged by the success which had attended my labours as a teacher of Elocution in London; having, moreover, many years' experience in the study and practice of the art, and finding that my proposition was most favourably regarded by the authorities and members generally of the University, I resolved to make the experiment, and as far as in my power lay, to endeavour to supply this much-complained-of deficiency.

Having submitted my proposal to the Vice-Chancellor, accompanied by a selection from the testimonials I had received from many well-known members of the Church and the Bar, and others who had been my pupils, and being favoured with a prompt and courteous answer, sanctioning my project, I resolved at once to carry out the scheme I had prepared; and accordingly delivered my opening lecture to the members



of the University at the Star Assembly Rooms, on the sixth of November, 1860.

For the gratifying reception then given to me, and for the favour with which my endeavours to supply a want at Oxford have been regarded, I feel my best acknowledgments are due; and more especially to those members of the University who attended my classes for instruction in Elocution. I beg also to return my sincere thanks for the very favourable notices of these lectures that appeared in the Oxford and metropolitan newspapers during the Term in which they were delivered.

It will be seen that my aim in publishing these lectures in a condensed form has been to impart as much practical information in the art which I profess to teach, as can be conveyed in this necessarily imperfect manner; and that information I have endeavoured to give in the plainest and simplest language.

CHARLES JOHN PLUMPTRE.

1, ESSEX COURT, TEMPLE,  
LONDON,  
*January, 1861.*

# THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF ELOCUTION,

## Considered in reference to the Various Professions.

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### LECTURE I.

*Introductory remarks.—Definition of Elocution.—The estimation in which the art was held by the Greeks and Romans.—Its decline and subsequent comparative neglect.—The great value and importance of Elocution, and the several reasons why all men in these days should make it a part of their studies.—To those preparing for the Church, the Bar, and Public Life generally, a knowledge of the true principles of Elocution almost indispensably necessary.—Tone of voice and clearness of articulation an index to station in society, refinement and cultivation of mind.—The Rev. Charles Kingsley.—Preachers, speakers, and public readers.—The value of an effective delivery.—Matter and manner.—The Bishop of Oxford as a preacher.—Clerical Elocution.—“Twenty Years in the Church.”—The mistakes of a curate in search of a proper tone of voice.—Clerical testimony to the value of a course of lessons from a good Elocution master.—What congregations occasionally suffer.—The value of being able at seasonable times to speak the right word in the right way.—Reading aloud considered as an accomplishment.—The good results that follow from its habitual practice.—Readers and hearers alike benefited.—Summary of the chief reasons why Elocution should in this age be cultivated.*

I FEEL that some apology is due from me for what I am well aware may be considered almost an act of presumption. To stand before an

assembly like this, composed for the most part of members of the first University in the world, and address them on the subject which I have chosen for my theme to-night, requires some courage and demands some explanation. Had there been among the endowed professorships attached to this University, one of a similar character to that which exists at King's College, London, and I believe also at one or two Theological Colleges in the provinces,—I mean a Professorship of Elocution and Public Reading, it would have been simply an act of gratuitous impertinence on my part to have appeared before you in the capacity I do this evening.

But in the absence hitherto of any such regular instruction in the art which I profess to teach at this University,—though by a singular coincidence I find that at Cambridge a member of Corpus Christi College, the Rev. Alexander D'Orsey, begins the very same work to-night there that I hope to accomplish here,—I am, after (I may be allowed to say) some considerable practical experience, emboldened to offer my services at Oxford during each Term as an instructor in Public Reading and other branches of Elocution.

And first, it is only right, before going any further, that I should endeavour to shew you why this art of Elocution is indeed, when properly considered, a most important one; and why men, especially those who in any way are intended for public life, should make it a systematic study.

It is only right that I should in this place define what I mean by the comprehensive term Elocution. I mean, then, that effective pronunciation which is given to words when they are arranged into sentences and form discourse. In this, too, are included the tones and various modulations of the voice, the enunciation of the speaker, and also the accompaniments of appropriate expression of countenance, and action. This art of Elocution, then, may be broadly defined as that system of rules which teaches us to pronounce written or extemporaneous composition with proper energy, correctness, variety and ease. Agreeably to this definition, therefore, good reading or speaking may be considered as that species of delivery which not only expresses the sense of the words, so as to be fully understood, but at the same time gives them all the power and beauty of which they are susceptible<sup>a</sup>.

Is it not strange, then, when we reflect on the power which spoken language has to excite the deepest feelings of our nature, that the cultivation of the art of speaking, which once received so much attention, should afterwards and for so long a time have been almost completely neglected?

We know that the Greeks and Romans paid great attention to the study of Elocution, and there

<sup>a</sup> See the works of Thelwall, Walker, Vandenhoff, Odell, Steele, Stuart, Rush, Chapman, Cazalet, Halcombe, &c.; also *Encycl. Britt.* and *Penny Encycl.*, tit. *Oratory—Elocution*.

can be no doubt that Demosthenes, Cicero, and other celebrated orators of classic times, attained to a high degree of excellence in the art. Whence, then, in after times its decline and comparative neglect? May not the fact thus be accounted for? When there was no press to spread far and wide over the land the winged words of thought, speech was the only power that could sway at will the passions of a people. Consequently the art of speech was studied, time and circumstance were alike favourable to its development, and its power was well understood and sedulously cultivated. But after the decline and fall of Greece and Rome came the dark night of the middle ages, and the long reign of despotic tyranny over mind as well as body. Can we wonder, when freedom of speech was of course impossible, that the art should sink into neglect? It is only in countries possessing true constitutional freedom like our own, that we can expect it to attain perfection; and yet how generally, how lamentably is it disregarded! And this, too, when with such institutions as ours, with such a Senate, such a Pulpit, such a Bar, public speaking and public reading seem to be almost a necessity—and with this necessity we have no regular school for the cultivation of the art.

But surely this is most unreasonable: words spoken or read without expression, it has been well remarked, are merely lifeless sounds, that scarcely reach the understanding and cannot affect

the soul. Even when we bend over the silent page, our minds are alive to what it offers only in proportion as we imagine a suitable delivery: and in reference to audible language, it is essentially imperfect unless accompanied by a clear articulation, significant accents, and tones of earnestness and feeling in unison with the import of the words<sup>b</sup>. We are not so negligent, I think, with regard to other languages. Why should we then so much neglect the right delivery of our own? Surely our noble expressive Anglo-Saxon tongue, the language of Shakespeare and Milton, the language which I am bold enough to say, of all translations best conveys the sublimity and grandeur of God's Holy Word, the language of our Prayer-book, the language which has been used as the instrument for the conveyance of thoughts the most beautiful and sublime by men whose names will live while literature endures,—surely a full comprehension by ourselves and an effective rendering to others of such a language deserves to be studied with all the care and attention we can bestow.

However, I may take a lower ground than this. Has it ever struck you how very much education, refinement, and the station in life where such qualities are commonly found, are, with rare exceptions, characterised by the polished tone of voice and corresponding clearness of articulation? I remember a passage in one of the earlier works

<sup>b</sup> See Stuart's preface to "The Practice of Elocution."

of that admirable writer of pure Saxon English, the Rev. Charles Kingsley, in which he describes his hero as being present at a village revel and trying to listen to the conversation that was going on around him. To his utter astonishment, he could hardly understand a single word of it. It was half articulate, nasal, guttural, *made up almost entirely of vowels*, like the speech of savages. He had never before been struck with the significant contrast between the sharp, clearly defined articulation, the vivid and varied tones of *the gentleman*, when compared with the coarse, half-formed growls, as of a company of seals, which he heard around him. That one single fact struck him perhaps more deeply than any: it connected itself with many of his physiological fancies, and it became the parent of many thoughts and plans of his after-life.

I take it, if we were to analyse the objections which are usually brought against Elocution as an art to be studied and practised by all men in any way likely to take part in public life, we should find that these objections emanate chiefly from two classes; viz. from those who think that internal impulse, "a natural gift" as they call it, is enough to ensure success in public speaking; and from those who contend that so long as the *matter* be sound and good, the *manner* and *delivery* are of little or no importance. Now to the one class of objectors I answer:—granting that public speak-

ing is more or less a natural gift, it is no more so than any other faculty which may be improved by study and cultivation; and to the other I say, without any hesitation, that *with the world in general* the sterling quality, the excellence, the *matter* of a speech or sermon, is but little felt unless accompanied by an apparently *earnest manner* and an *effective delivery*. Bear in mind here that I am speaking of a discourse *the effect of which is intended to be felt and its end attained at the time of its delivery*; I am not talking now of speeches or sermons intended to be read and studied hereafter; and I speak now of what is felt by the *great mass* of congregations and audiences, and not of what is felt by the *select few*. It is not always our good fortune to address refined and cultivated assemblies, who are willing to overlook a wearisome or defective manner for the sake of the excellence of the matter. You cannot always preach to University congregations, or argue points of law before Courts sitting *in banco*. You will have to rouse the torpid nature, the apathetic mind, the stolid ignorance of village labourers and "city Arabs." You will have to address common juries in the country as well as learned judges in Westminster Hall; and if looking to the Senate as the object of your ambition, remember election mobs and dinner assemblies of constituents have to be addressed as well as a critical and fastidious House of Commons or House of Lords.



I venture, then, to say that public speaking, public reading, or, in one word, the art of Elocution, deserves to be studied by every man intended for professional life, or likely at any time to be called upon to address popular assemblies. I believe this to be true as regards *all* professional life, but I think it bears with peculiar force upon those who are destined for the Church. And for this reason—when we *speak* in public, we warm with the feelings of the moment, we are carried away by the rush of our emotions and the flow of our ideas, and even the man who is commonly of a heavy and unexcitable temperament, under the influence of powerful passions, rouses up, and becomes as it were for the time a new being. This, too, will hold equally good with regard to *extempore* preaching, but it is very different with “Public Reading.” In reading, especially if the subject be one very familiar to us, repeated by us from week to week, if not from day to day, we are too apt (even if we articulate distinctly) to pronounce our words monotonously and to read *mechanically*. Now we want something more—whether we read the inspired words of the sacred volume, our holy and beautiful Liturgy, or a discourse from the pulpit—than mere distinctness of articulation; we want that full pure utterance and proper use of the inflections of the voice essential to just modulation which will render the reading significant, and that varied and appropriate ex-

pression, manner, earnestness, feeling and good taste, which will render it impressive.

Now with regard to Public Reading, I cannot but think (as I do of most things in life), *if it be worth doing at all, it is worth doing well*. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might:" and I say, whatsoever words we have to utter, let us speak them, so as to bring them home to our hearers' minds and hearts, with all the truth and power of which they are capable.

I cannot think it is a matter of indifference, whether a man opens the sacred volume, and reads to his congregation a chapter in the hurried and unmeaning "gabble," (to use a plain but most expressive Anglo-Saxon word,) or drawls through it in the weary, listless, monotonous tone and manner with which some of us, I am sure, must ere now in our wanderings have heard the Word of God—I was about to say—profaned; or whether he follows (may I be pardoned for venturing to name him in my lecture) the example of that most admirable reader and preacher, the Bishop of this diocese, and in voice and accents full and clear, and most solemn in tone and emphatic in meaning, makes every word of the inspired page fall not merely on the ear, but on the *heart*, there abiding, there awakening, there comforting<sup>c</sup>.

<sup>c</sup> In a pamphlet just published, addressed by Mr. Matthew Fielde to the rate-payers of Marylebone with reference to the

Surely if there be such an art, such a power, that art is worth studying, that power is worth acquiring.

I was much struck two or three months ago with the truth of a passage I met with, while perusing a very well-known work by the Rev. James Pycroft—I mean “Twenty Years in the Church.” In the chapter to which I allude Mr. Pycroft says,—“To read in a church is no easy matter. You are required to use your voice in a manner wholly new to you. You have to pitch your voice in a certain key, to dwell upon your vowels, and to read much louder than you ever read before. If really natural, you seem artificial, and you must become in a degree artificial to seem natural. Like an actor, you really must, till habit forms a second nature, appear to yourself to exaggerate, that you may not sound flat and feeble to your audience.

“The adventures of any poor curate in quest of

adoption of the Public Libraries Act, I was impressed forcibly by the truth of the following passage in reference to clerical reading:—“The crowded church of St. Mark attests Mr. Bellew’s popularity; and that neglected art among clergymen, the art of reading, the reverend gentleman has attained to perfection. I could not but think, as Mr. Bellew read the twelfth chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, that it would be well for the Church if there were more such splendid readers, and if in the ordering of deacons the bishop’s examining chaplain put the question to every candidate for Orders, ‘Can you read?’ or, ‘Have you passed your examination in the art of reading?’ A moderately good reader even is a *rara avis*. A few lessons in the art of reading and elocution would work wonders.”

a proper tone of voice would often be amusing indeed. At one time I was told I was too low: next Sunday this made me thin and wiry. Then I read in a monotone, to avoid which I became uneven, as if trying every note of the gamut by turns. When at last I was settling down into some regular habit, our doctor, who had been reading some paper on Elocution, asked me if I happened to have a pretty good stomach, for he could tell me that I tasked that department not only with my Sunday dinners, but also with my Sunday duty: for, in short, I read from my stomach. Then in altering this I was alarmed at being told that I read from my throat, and what with bending my chin, and with a stiff cravat, the dreaded 'clerical sore throat' must come in no time. Add to this, I was informed anatomically that the roof of the mouth was nature's sounding-board, and that the nostrils were intended to act like the holes of a flute, and that what was called 'reading through the nose' was a misnomer; for I really ought to read through my nose, and that I had only to hold my nose while I read to acquire at once the true conventicle twang.

"I am only relating a simple fact when I say that every error in the use of my poor lungs, stomach, throat, palate, tongue, teeth, and nasal organ, had their day with me; and rarely do I hear a clergyman read, but I recognise one or more of the same blunders.

"A common fault in reading is the monotone, and when, as I sometimes hear, there is this drowsiness of tone, added to a 'drift' or see-saw of measured cadences at the same time, why then even the old nursery tune of 'lullaby baby' itself cannot be compared to such soothing sounds for rocking the cradle of the hearer's brains.

"Now, reading in church requires so much breath, you cannot afford to waste any. The labour is so great to vocal organs (especially, I may add, when not accustomed to the work) that you cannot afford to tire them needlessly. The voice required is so loud, you cannot afford to lose any of the aids of intonation, articulation, or reverberation. In one word, your lungs, throat, and mouth form one most complicated machine. In reading in church these organs are applied to a new purpose, almost as different as singing is from talking, and *the very wisest thing a young curate can do, is to take a course of lessons from a good Elocution master. Nor could any benevolent Churchman spend his money better than by maintaining a clerical reading master for the benefit of the diocese.*

"Many a clergyman, for want of knowing the benefit he could derive from a course of reading lessons, inflicts a cruel drawl upon his congregation, and most unnecessary labour upon himself. As to the 'clerical sore throat,' the barrister and the speaker are alike free from it. The dissenting preacher is also free from it. It is for the most part a truly orthodox complaint. It arises not

from talking, but from reading, and no doubt from reading badly. Though I would impress that any man may sustain injury if he reads when he has a sore throat. To shew what may be attained by taking a course of reading lessons, I will add an anecdote relating to one of the most able and experienced elocutionists of the day. A certain eminent actor being rather indisposed, resolved one night, not actually to absent himself, but to deliver his part without exertion. Much to his surprise, he was told he never spoke so distinctly or could be heard so well before. From that observation he discovered the grand secret of reading audibly without effort, or comparative fatigue, and Mr. ——— formed his system of instruction accordingly."

Now there is very great truth contained in the passages I have just read to you, and the experience of the poor curate, who is the hero in "Twenty Years in the Church," must, I am convinced from my own observations, be the experience of thousands.

But there are many other ways in which men, whether clerical or lay, may find it of inestimable value to be able to speak at the right time *the right word in the right way*, and possessing this power, may find results flowing from it scarcely calculable by human wisdom.

Thank God, the comparative apathy and indifference to surrounding vice and wretchedness

which characterised a preceding generation is fast passing away from us, and we have but to look around and see the noble institutions, the philanthropic societies, which are springing up throughout the length and breadth of the land, to be convinced how much more alive men are to their responsibilities and duties than they were fifty years ago. Now a man, whether it be his lot to live in a pleasant country village amid a simple agricultural population, or in crowded cities and among those peculiar forms of vice which infest all great towns, will find plenty of opportunities for doing good if he will watch for them. You will, indeed, be ever on the look-out for the right season in which to speak the right word. You will (and though I am addressing men preparing for various professions, I speak here particularly to those who are about to enter the sacred ministry of the Church) make yourselves acquainted with *all* the classes that surround you, but more especially with the poor, the afflicted, and the ignorant; you will learn their wants; you will sympathize with their many struggles, privations, and distresses, and will strive, as far as in your power lies, to minister to their temporal as well as spiritual necessities. Suppose you are called, as doubtless you will be often, very often, to the bedside of some poor wretched man or woman, stricken with disease, borne down in mind and body by the remembrances of many

deeds that could be wished, too late, undone, and seeking, vainly seeking, for rest and comfort. In fulfilment of the sacred trust especially confided to you, you endeavour to lead that anxious mind, that sorrow-stricken heart, to that Divine Source where alone true repose and consolation are to be found: you kneel by that bedside and pray for that poor sufferer: or you open the Book of books, and read to him such passages as you think most appropriate to his particular circumstances and condition. Do you deem it indifferent with what tone of voice or manner you pray for him or read to him? Do you think he will be equally affected, whether your whole heart seems in the work, or whether you read or pray in a voice and manner that, at all events, *seem* cold and formal, or hurried and careless, and void of all expression and meaning? I say emphatically, No! God works commonly by human instruments, and it is the bounden duty of those who are more especially chosen to be His instruments in the conveyance of His divine message, that they should cultivate their powers to the very utmost, to render them efficient in the all-important duties confided to them.

Though it is in the Senate, in the Church, and at the Bar that the advantages of being skilled in the art of Elocution will be most manifest, yet there is scarcely any calling now pursued by men of liberal education, in which a knowledge of its principles and moderate efficiency in its practice



will not be found at times most useful. The medical man has to lecture to his pupils in the anatomical theatre; the officer in the army or navy to give commands and issue orders, and sometimes, moreover, make addresses to the men who are under his authority; the engineer to explain intricate calculations and elaborate plans before committees and other persons; and all these, and I might mention other vocations, cannot (it must be admitted, I think) but derive great benefit from acquiring an art which enables them to speak clearly and intelligibly to their hearers, and with ease, comfort, and freedom to themselves.

But I will view the subject now in another light, and on a much lower ground—I mean simply as an intellectual recreation. And let me ask, save music and song, what social pleasure is there greater than that of reading aloud, *as they should be read*, the great masters of English prose and poetry? The Public Readings which are now being carried on during the winter months for the amusement and relaxation of toiling thousands in so many parts of England, as well as in the metropolis, sufficiently prove this. To any person who has been present at these social gatherings, and witnessed the delight of an audience when a skilful reader has brought home to their hearts as well as senses “the universal and unparalleled opulence of Shakespeare, the sacred harmony of Milton, the gentle fancy of Spenser, the nervous

energy of Dryden, the tender flow of Goldsmith, or the moral gravity of Cowper<sup>d</sup>," not to mention the great writers, whether in prose or poetry, of more recent times and of the present day, the truth of the remarks I have just made will at once be evident.

While bestowing, then, due attention to the grammatical construction and right pronunciation of other languages, do not neglect to pay equal care on these points to our own. Do not, I beseech you, undervalue our fine, expressive, noble English tongue. I am very far from seeking to depreciate other languages, but I do assert this, that there is no argument, however learned or profound; no poetry, however beautiful and affecting; no drama, however grand, spirit-stirring, and sublime, to which its wondrous comprehensiveness has not been adapted with force, vigour, and propriety almost unrivalled.

I have, however, yet to dwell on one most important result which I have ever found to follow from the practice of reading aloud to others, *and to young persons* especially, the works of our best authors, and that is the *taste* for reading which is engendered in the auditors; and this taste, I firmly believe, once awakened, lasts as long as life endures. And when once we are taught really to know what books are to us, can we ever sufficiently estimate their value?

<sup>d</sup> From a lecture by Lord Carlisle.

They are the sources of our learning, the elevators of our souls, the cheerers of our solitary hours, the means by which we taste the purest sources of enjoyment. Nay, if our lives be measured by the ideas which arise within our minds, and not by the minutes or hours of the dial, we may almost be said to lengthen our existence even on earth indefinitely, and to live as it were at once in the past, the present, and the future.

Great, however, as are the blessings, and manifold as are the pleasures which attend the perusal of the master-spirits of literature, the blessings and the pleasures are *comparatively only selfish*, so long as we confine ourselves within the walls of our studies. But when we *read aloud effectively and significantly* they lose this character, and then they become blessings and pleasures spread abroad and shared by others in common with ourselves; and a higher, purer, and cheaper pleasure I can scarcely imagine.

I do not for one moment attempt to deny that to attain proficiency in this art of reading aloud requires of course the due cultivation, not merely of the voice and ear, but also of the various faculties of the mind; for I hold it to be utterly impossible that an unintelligent, an unrefined person, can ever (no matter what natural advantages he may possess in the way of voice or person) be a really good reader. Unless there be taste, refinement, and discriminating power within, the

corresponding intonation, emphasis, and modulation, will either be wholly wanting, or else will be found lamentably misplaced. I do not deny that the art of Elocution does require much cultivation, much study, much practice to attain perfection; but let me remind you, so does every art that is worth acquiring at all. The eye, the ear, all our senses, indeed, require to be cultivated to enjoy the full gratification of which they are capable. Do not, then, be discouraged by what I frankly tell you. You will require to give thought and attention, followed by careful practice in reading aloud the best works of the best authors, if you would attain anything like success in the art which I profess to teach. It shall be my endeavour in the more practical lectures which will follow this, to make my rules and illustrations as plain and simple as I possibly can. I have hitherto, as you will have noticed, confined myself in this introductory lecture to the task of endeavouring to lay before you as strongly as I could the various reasons *why* all men of liberal education, but more especially those about to enter the Church, or preparing for the Bar, should include Elocution among their studies. My succeeding lectures will more especially endeavour to shew you *how* this art should be studied, and its principles carried into practice.

## LECTURE II.

*The elementary principles of Elocution.—Necessity of acquiring them thoroughly.—Brief general description of the various speech-organs and their several functions.—How vocal sound is produced and formed into words.—The ‘laryngoscope’ recently invented by Professor Azermak.—The right manner of using the several speech-organs.—The acts of inspiration and expiration.—The divine gift of speech.—Elocution considered in a sanitary point of view.—Mr. Kingsbury’s remarks in his treatise on singing.—Their general applicability to reading and speaking.—Beneficial effect on the human constitution of speaking or reading properly, and according to the true principles of Elocution.—Practical illustrations.*

**I** MUST prepare you to expect in this lecture one of a very plain, dry, and practical character ; but according to the plan which I have prepared for giving instruction to you, I fear it cannot be otherwise.

Since my introductory lecture was attended by you, you will have remarked that in the case of all whose names are inscribed as attending my class of pupils, my practice has been at first to hear each man read in succession pieces of ordinary level character, selected chiefly from Milton or Shakespeare, for twenty minutes or half-an-hour together. My object in doing this was to make myself acquainted with your several styles, capacities, and physical powers, and so to note in each of you the various points to which my attention hereafter would be directed, and to mark in my

own mind what were the respective excellencies I should have to cultivate, and what the faults it would be my duty to point out and endeavour to correct. Having thus ascertained, by the practical test of observation, what are your present powers of voice, and what are the several styles of reading peculiar to each member of my class, I do not desire again to exercise you in this respect, until I have explained to you some of those principles and rules which I consider the groundwork and foundation of all the various branches of Elocution.

In learning the science of music, before the fingers are suffered to touch the keys of the organ or piano, a man is well grounded in the first elements of the science. In learning the art of singing, before the pupil is permitted to try the power and modulation of his voice in any air, he has to pass through many a weary course of scales and exercises. So also in Elocution, before you can with perfect ease to yourselves, or thorough satisfaction to your auditors, undertake the task of preaching an important sermon, making an effective address, or reading a grand poem or exciting narrative of any length, it is most essential that you should be thoroughly grounded, not merely theoretically, but practically, in the first principles of the art.

In asking you, then, to give me your close and undivided attention during the whole of the remarks I shall have to make to you in the course

of this long, and I fear somewhat tedious, lecture, I must base my request on the indispensable necessity of your so doing, if you desire to attain excellence, or even a moderate degree of excellence, in the accomplishment I hope to see so much more generally cultivated amongst us than it is at present.

The rules that I shall give you are the results of many years' constant study, observation, and personal practice ; and if you will but remember and carry them out, I am certain I do not speak too confidently, when I assure you the reward will be self-possession, ease and pleasure, to you who read or speak, and satisfaction, more or less, to the audiences whom you have to address. I do not so much here speak of what I have experienced in my own person, as I do of what has been experienced by pupils who have carefully remembered and practised the principles and rules which I have given them for their guidance.

I have confined myself hitherto to the task of setting before you as strongly as I was able to put them, the several reasons *why* you should endeavour to attain proficiency in the art of speaking and reading correctly and effectively. I must now endeavour to shew you in the best way I can, *how* to do so.

And here I must ask you to attend to a very brief description, which I think it best to give you now, of the anatomy and physiology of the several

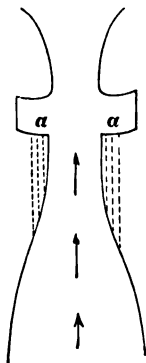
organs which are concerned in the production, modulation, and articulation of the human voice. I shall do this in the simplest language I can find, and with as little recourse to mere technical anatomical details as possible. But I deem it to be so essential that you should have some correct general notion of the beautiful and wonderful mechanism by which sound is produced, modulated, and formed into articulate words, in order that you may know afterwards how to treat that complex mechanism properly, how to rightly use, and not abuse, its several parts and functions; and finally, how best to preserve its wonderful and delicate powers unimpaired by use and uninjured by lapse of time, that I think it is only right to explain all this to you as clearly, and at the same time as concisely, as I can.

It would certainly seem, from the way in which so important a part of the human system is treated, that, out of the medical profession, few persons in general are aware of the great extent of the lungs, of the space they occupy in the body, and of the paramount necessity, as regards health, that they should have full room for exercise, and frequent opportunity for the discharge of the important functions belonging to them. They occupy, indeed, nearly all the space comprised within the ribs, and, to use a very familiar comparison, are as necessary to us in the production of voice as is the bellows to the organ in the production



of sound. Well, the lungs, then, being filled by the act of breathing, (of which all-important act of breathing I will speak more fully and particularly hereafter,) a current of air is transmitted by means of the connecting windpipe, through the apparatus called the *larynx*. From the *larynx*, the air afterwards passes through a variable cavity, consisting of the passage into the mouth, called the *pharynx*, the mouth, and the nose. Finally, it escapes from the lips into the surrounding atmosphere, where it strikes as it were, more or less forcibly, and causes the *sound-waves*, as they may be termed, to undulate on, in proportion to the degree of force with which the air has been expelled by the speaker. You must remember, however, that it is in that part which is called the *larynx* that simple vocal sound is produced. How that sound is modified into tones deeper or higher in range of compass, I will endeavour to explain to you by the following diagram:—

“The parts at *a*—*a* may be compared to the lips in a state of tension. These are the vocal chords, (*chordæ vocales*,) and by their alternate vibration towards and from the dotted lines under the pressure of the issuing air, those impulses are caused



upon which the sounds of the voice depend. The figure between these vocal chords is called the *rima glottidis*: hence these parts have also been called the lips of the glottis, and by the different states of tension which they possess the sounds are regulated, the high notes being given out when the chords or lips are in a state of tension, and the grave ones when they are in a state of comparative relaxation\*." I may observe that the *laryngoscope*, as it is named, recently invented by Professor Azermak, of the city of Prague, has very beautifully confirmed this theory, and has thrown much light, in every sense of the word, upon the functions of the more deeply situated organs which are concerned in the production of vocal sound. The instrument, and the various physiological phenomena already ascertained by it, will be found fully described in an article by Dr. G. D. Gibb, which appeared in "The Lancet" of September the 29th, 1860.

I have now, then, in some degree, I hope, made you understand how *vocal sound* is produced by us; but remember it is *sound* only. We have

\* For the advantage of having this simple diagram and its explanation, in order that you may the more easily understand how vocal sounds are produced and modified, I am indebted to an extract from Professor Mayo's "Outlines of Human Physiology," given in my friend Mr. Frederick Kingsbury's excellent little work, just published by Messrs. Cocks and Co., New Burlington Street, entitled "The Voice and its Management in Singing;" price 4s.

not got further than this step yet. Up to this point we have not got much beyond the dog when he barks, or the wolf when he howls. Now comes the question, How do we form mere *sound* into *words*? how do we articulate? how do we speak?

The speech organs essentially are, (as your own common sense and experience will tell you,) the tongue, the teeth, and the lips. These severally act upon the air expelled from the lungs and through the *larynx*, &c., and thus the sound is moulded into articulate language, as it were, simultaneously with its production; and so we become possessed of the Divine gift of speech, the power of conveying our inmost thoughts and wishes instantaneously to others, the power which immeasurably above all others distinguishes man from the brute creation.

Surely when we consider that it is by this God-like attribute alone that we stand so far raised above the rest of the animal world, we ought to value it far higher than we commonly do. Is it not almost a national reproach and shame to us, that we should so little appreciate the glorious gift—this exclusive privilege of our race? that we should comparatively so little cultivate or endeavour to improve it, and turn its vast and varied powers to the best advantage? that, with rare exceptions, the study of the art does not form, in this country at least, an element in the general education either of men or women?

I quite agree with a well-known physician<sup>b</sup>, when he says, "It is certainly great inconsistency to lavish all our care and attention in storing the mind with knowledge, and yet make no provision for cultivating the medium by which this knowledge may be made available to others." It is now, while the vocal organs are flexible, and the whole frame exults in the fresh and elastic vigour of early manhood, that you may cultivate the art of speaking, reading, and other branches of elocution, with such comparative ease to yourselves and such advantage to others. Now is the season when you can most profitably bestow attention on the cultivation of the voice, and the improvement of delivery, as well as the correction of those faults of accent and intonation, which in general spring from ignorance, inattention, or instinctive imitation. In a word, as I have said before, so now I say again with all emphasis and earnestness, the human voice, with its wonderful and varied powers, its infinite and delicate shades of expression, ought to have as much care and attention as we bestow on the development and cultivation of any of our other faculties.

I am well aware that most authors on works on Elocution devote many pages of their books to the explanation of the various functions which are performed by the several vocal and speech organs in the formation of the different letters of the alphabet.

<sup>b</sup> Dr. Mackness, *Dysphonia Clericorum*.

I do not undervalue their efforts and patient industry in this particular; but I shall not adopt this plan with you, and for this reason: my connection with you will not end with the delivery of this course of lectures. I shall have you under my own personal care and tuition, and where I observe any defect in the pronunciation of any letters, simple or compound, I think I can do more to cure such defect by one or two practical explanations and examples, than I could effect by devoting the remainder of this lecture to the consideration of all the letters of the alphabet in succession.

So for the present I waive this part of the subject, and proceed to the consideration of more interesting, and I think more useful matter,—at all events matter, as it seems to me, better suited for discussion and explanation in a lecture.

And first I take that all-important subject, whether considered in an elocutionary or in a sanitary point of view, viz. the act of breathing—knowing how to breathe properly.

It may very possibly excite a smile of surprise, if not of incredulity, but I think I am not going too far, when I venture to say that not one person in ten, on the average, knows how to breathe properly. I am perfectly sure the experience I have had among the pupils who have been under my care justifies me in saying as much.

Now I told you early in the present lecture

what an enormous space the lungs occupy in our bodies, filling up in fact nearly all that is encompassed by the ribs. How much of your lungs do you think you habitually use in this same act of breathing? A very limited portion, I fear; in fact, just that portion which lies at the upper part of the chest, and no more: and what is the result when you attempt, thus breathing, to read or speak for any length of time? I fancy I can tolerably well describe what you experience. Do you not find that your breath very soon becomes exhausted, and being again taken hastily, and not sufficiently deep, the results which ensue are the following, with more or less aggravation, according as the natural constitution is more or less robust: you feel a sense of weight at the chest, of general oppression, exhaustion, and weariness, and very possibly other and more alarming symptoms. And can you wonder at these disastrous consequences not unfrequently following? Can you feel surprised that your health should suffer by so wrong an exercise of such an important organ in the system? I want to impress upon you that *proper* breathing is *healthy* breathing; and that reading aloud, speaking and singing, are, when *correctly* performed, *most healthful, invigorating, and beneficial exercises to the body as well as to the mind.* If, however, from habit or inattention, you do not as a rule properly inflate the lungs, why, a *portion* only, instead of the *whole*, is brought into

action; and this portion is called on to perform over and over again more than its proper share of work, to compensate, as far as its weakened and abused powers can, for the remaining part, i.e. the great mass of the lungs, being left inactive and unemployed. Where this is the case, can you be surprised that that part of the chest, so over-worked and abused, should eventually become weakened, and the lungs and throat morbidly delicate and subject to disease? I tell you most earnestly that the proper dilation of your lungs, even in ordinary breathing,—and of course what I say applies with tenfold force when you speak or read aloud,—is a matter affecting most seriously the preservation of health at every stage of existence.

And now having, I hope, by what I have said, convinced you of the importance of breathing properly, your next question of course will be, “How is this to be done?”

Well, then, I will shew you. Like most of nature’s good gifts to man, it is no mystery; it is very easy to be acquired with a little attention; and a few weeks’ careful practice will with most persons render it habitual for life. You have merely to assume an erect, but perfectly easy, attitude, the head being slightly, but *very slightly*, thrown back, and then through the nostrils, and with closed lips, take the inspiration, and thus supply the lungs with the amount of air re-

quired\*. Do this easily and noiselessly, without the slightest apparent effort; for bear in mind that the perfection of art is to conceal the appearance of all art. The motto of the elocutionist should ever be, *Ars celare artem*. The best test that I can give you by which you may ascertain that your lungs have been properly filled with air is this:—you should feel the *act of inflation at the back as well as at the chest to the extremity of the ribs*. I beg you to remember this, for it is one of the golden rules of Elocution.

Next in order, of course, comes the act of expiration. You cannot, I need hardly say, empty your lungs properly, until you have learned the art of filling them properly. I will assume, then, that you have acquired thoroughly the art of inflating the lungs to their requisite extent and capacity. I have now, therefore, to shew you how to make the best use of the supply of air which you have thus acquired. I need not, I am sure, stop to dilate at any great length upon the proper management of the breath in the act of expiration, being an essential element of elocution, and, like the act of inspiration, an all-important consideration. The breath being, as I have shewn you, the primary cause of vocal sound, and the lungs being nature's reservoir for the reception

\* Of course if the reader can see how this is managed by a skilful and accomplished elocutionist, who has been accustomed to instruct pupils in the art, it is most desirable he should do so.



of air, and containing only a certain amount of it proportionate to their depth and extent, it is most incumbent on the speaker or reader to know how to *economize*, as it were, and make the most varied and effective use of that supply. Besides the personal sense of fatigue that will follow from an error in this respect, too large a stream of breath exercises an injurious influence on the pitch and quality of the voice, and moreover tends to destroy all purity and delicacy of tone, by the very efforts which are made to sustain the art of expiration.

In dwelling upon this portion of my subject, I do not think I can do better than quote the remarks of my friend Mr. Kingsbury, because, though his work professedly refers to singing only, yet in this respect all that he says applies with equal force and propriety to reading aloud and speaking: "Although we all know that in the common operation of breathing, the air passes out of the lungs as quickly as it passes into them, yet it cannot too much be insisted upon that in singing" (and in reading aloud also, I would observe parenthetically) "the lungs must acquire the power to control the passage outwards of the breath; that is, instead of the quick, gushing exhalation, as in breathing, the stream of breath must be rendered as small as possible, so that the sound may not only be prolonged, but that, too, with a degree of clearness of tone and complete-

ness of control, indispensable to perfect vocalization. The difference will be at once evident by trying to produce a sound, emitting the breath as in the act of breathing, and it will be found that although the *larynx* may have been placed in the vocalizing position, yet the sound will be of a disagreeable husky quality, and of very short duration, for the lungs will have become exhausted almost instantaneously. If, on the contrary, the process be repeated at the same time that we endeavour to prolong the outward passage of the breath, the result will be a clearer and purer quality of vocal sound, together with a much augmented power of sustaining it.

“The vocal sound, then, does not require a large stream of breath, and I shall only give one example more in this place tending to shew the advantages of a modified form of using it.

“A practised reader takes breath but seldom, and yet what a number of words he will pronounce, sentence after sentence, in the same breath; and when he does replenish the reservoirs within, it is done so quickly and quietly as to be almost imperceptible.

“This is equally required in speaking and singing, for all are performed by the same physical means; with this only difference, that in singing, the changes of articulation not being generally so frequent or so rapid, the vocal sound to compensate for this should be caused to *dwell* upon

the vowel of the syllable or word expressed : thus the singer substitutes *sustained sound*," (and so also, I would stop to observe, does the reader of poetry, though in a less degree and in a modified form,) "for that which the speaker uses in rapid succession ; the reader, speaker, and singer alike requiring but a small stream of breath to effect a clear and elegant enunciation.

"Enough has been said, it is now hoped, to shew the desirability of economizing the breath in the production of the vocal tone. The pupil may rest assured that there is nothing so pernicious to the true development of the vocal sound or tone as a too profuse expenditure of breath. The smaller the stream the better, if it is the wish to acquire a really good tone and likewise the facility of prolonging it."

These, then, are the remarks of Mr. Kingsbury, and of the soundness of the principles contained in them I am thoroughly convinced.

One of the modes by which the supply of breath is *wasted*, instead of being *economized*, I continually observe in the pupils I have had under my care, and it consists in the following error. Instead of *seizing* the sound, as it were, and articulating the very instant the mouth opens, the lips are suffered to remain apart for a few seconds before the pupil begins actually to read or speak. By this mistake much valuable breath is lost, and the sound of the voice most seriously injured in quality, to say

nothing of the personal fatigue and speedy exhaustion caused by this erroneous habit. And now, as some relief to what I fear has necessarily been a somewhat dry lecture, and also as a means of fixing the rules I have been laying down firmly in your minds, I will practically illustrate my remarks to you by reading some few selections, with articulation clear and distinct enough, but committing the errors I have been warning you against. You will, I think, find by the great care I shall bestow on the articulation of each word, I shall be perfectly audible even in the remotest part of this hall, but you will perceive in my reading that all the mistakes I am now pointing out and warning you against, have precisely the same results. Whether I only half fill my lungs with air, or whether I take the inspiration with the lips apart, or whether I suffer them to be open for a second or two before I begin to read or speak, I shall equally injure the fullness of tone. What musicians call *roundness of voice* will be in a great measure gone; it will sound thin and flat, and you will hear that the power of conveying with anything like due effect the various passions or emotions pourtrayed in the piece which I am about to read, is almost entirely destroyed.

I will then read the same passage, taking care to inflate the lungs adequately, and properly economize the supply of breath I have thus ob-

tained, and you will hear how very differently the whole poem will sound <sup>d</sup>.

I am inclined to think that these occasional practical illustrations in my own person, as I proceed with my course of lectures, will serve materially to explain my reasoning, and tend perhaps more than anything else to fix the principles I am laying down firmly in your memories.

<sup>d</sup> Tennyson's poem of "Dora" was here read as an illustration.

### LECTURE III.

*The 'mechanics' of Elocution.—Mistakes of early life in regard to the management of the voice.—Serious maladies caused or aggravated by wrongly using the speech organs.—Contrast in the effects produced by not knowing and knowing how to read or speak rightly.—The results to the individual.—“Dysphonia clericorum.”—Its nature and cause.—Prevented and cured by acquiring and practising the true principles of Elocution.—Medical testimony to this assertion.—General rules for reading aloud.—Miss Nightingale's remarks.—Other observations and quotations.—Pauses.—Emphasis.—Value of emphasis when rightly placed and discreetly used.—Illustration.—The Rev. W. Cazale's theory regarding emphasis.—Difference between Mr. Cazale's view of the subject and that taken by the lecturer.—Arguments in support of the opinion held by the latter.*

**M**Y last lecture was devoted, you will remember, to teaching you as well as I could, by example as well as precept, the chief points in what I may term *the mechanics of Elocution*; especially the right management of the breath as regards the two all-important acts of inspiration and expiration. I have not quite done with this branch of the subject yet.

In the course of my experience I frequently hear it said by pupils of both sexes, “Oh, my voice is *naturally weak*!” and in nine cases out of ten I am able, with great truth, to answer,

"Forgive me, but you are mistaken: your voice is only *apparently* weak,—and weak simply from not knowing, or, if knowing, not practising, the right mode of managing the breath."

Indeed, I think I am not going too far, when I say of the numbers who suffer from an apparently natural weakness of voice, or who experience difficulty in any prolonged exercise of the vocal organs in reading aloud or speaking, that in by far the larger proportion of instances, the reason may be found in one or more of the three following errors: the breath is forced; or it is taken too quickly and spasmodically; or the lungs are not filled with such a due and appropriate supply of air as will, with proper economy, afford as it were ample *material* for conversion into prolonged vocal articulate sounds. Now any of these causes will produce that feebleness of tone, and general absence of power and expression, which so many persons fancy to be an inherent or natural defect in the voice; but it is not so. Even in persons really of delicate constitutions, and with decided predisposition towards affections of the lungs, there is often no reason whatever why the voice should be of the poor, feeble quality it is in such *assumed* confirmed invalids. It arose originally from the mistake committed, in wrongly managing the breath in very early life, and this mistake has, with the lapse of years, become at last habitual. Indeed, it is astonishing what strange mistakes

are daily committed by persons of all ages and stations in society in regard to reading and speaking. Only three or four weeks ago, a pupil preparing for the Church came to me (of course I mention the names neither of persons nor localities, and so no violation of confidence can possibly take place) and expressed his desire to take lessons in Elocution, especially with reference to reading the Scriptures and Liturgy. As I always do in such cases, for the purpose of making myself acquainted with a man's particular merits or defects, I desired him to read aloud a chapter in the Bible. To my amazement, he began in a tone of voice that seemed to proceed from some mysterious cavernous recess: it was in truth such a strange kind of hollow *forced-back* voice, (if I may use such a word,) that I can only describe it as a species (*literally*) of ventriloquism, or speaking from the stomach. On my asking him what was his reason for adopting such a strange, unnatural tone, his answer was,—“Why, I always thought it right to read from the chest!” as if having heard of the *voce di petto*, as musicians call it, he imagined the proper way to produce this *chest voice* was to force his own voice backwards as it were down into his chest, causing thereby extreme fatigue, and greatly impairing, I need scarcely observe, the distinctness of articulation. You can imagine it was not very long before I succeeded in explaining to him what a *chest-voice* really meant, and how comparatively soon,



even in what may seem at first most unpromising cases, it may with proper care and diligent practice be acquired. I merely mention this as one—though certainly an extreme—case of the mistakes that even persons who are otherwise well educated labour under, in regard to the very first elements of Elocution.

You must pardon me if I seem to dwell unnecessarily at so much length on this portion of my subject; but my justification is its great importance, and the long array of discomforts,—not to say diseases, which follow from the lamentable state of ignorance which too generally prevails respecting the physiology and functions of the vocal organs: all which evils may be prevented or speedily cured by following out the simple and natural rules I am endeavouring to explain to you.

Believe me when I say, in all sincerity, that no man who is intended for the Church, the Bar, or public life generally, will ever regret—even on a *purely selfish ground*, his *own personal ease and comfort*—the time he has spent in thoroughly acquiring the elementary principles of Elocution. It is advantageous to men of all professions to learn these principles, but more especially is it to those who are destined for the Church, and whose vocal organs have to be exercised so constantly in the art of reading.

And here I do not hesitate to say that just in

proportion as *reading aloud, without knowing how to do so*, is one of the most fatiguing exercises you can engage in,—wearisome to the mind, exhausting to the body, and often paving the way to serious diseases of the throat and chest,—so I say that *reading aloud, knowing how to do so*, is healthy, invigorating, and beneficial in its influence on all our mental as well as on all our physical faculties.

Now I am perfectly well aware how widely spread is the notion that “reading aloud,” though thus healthy and beneficial for the robust, is just the reverse for the man who is not so. It is, believe me, one of the most fallacious notions that ever existed. Nay, I will go so far as to say this, if you are not strong, if you are not robust, if you have any tendency, hereditary or otherwise, towards diseases of the lungs or throat, it is just the very reason why you should read aloud more or less, and that too, if possible, regularly every day. And when I say this, of course I assume that you know how to read properly, and that you read also under due restriction as regards your real capability.

It is very probable that some surprise may be felt at my laying down such a proposition as this; and doubtless many of you are disposed to say, “Well, this may be very true, but we should like to have a little more than mere assertion; we should wish to have such statements supported by something like good medical authority.” Be it

so. I call, then, in proof of my assertion, a very high medical authority, Sir Henry Holland. I take Sir Henry Holland's "Medical Notes," and at p. 422 I read as follows:—

"Might not more be done in practice towards the prevention of pulmonary disease, as well as for the general improvement of health, by expressly exercising the organs of respiration? that is, by practising, according to method, those actions of the body through which the chest is in part filled or emptied of air? Though suggestions to this effect occur in some of our best works on consumption, as well as in the writings of certain continental physicians, they have hitherto had less than their due influence, and the principle as such is comparatively little recognised or brought into general application. In truth, common usage takes for the most part a directly opposite course; and, under the notion or pretext of quiet, seeks to repress all direct exercise of this important function, in those who are presumed to have any tendency to pulmonary disorders. . . . As regards the modes of exercising the function of respiration, they should be various to suit the varying powers and exigencies of the patient. *Reading aloud (clara lectio)* is one of very ancient recommendation, the good effects of which are not limited to this object alone.

"It might indeed be well were the practice of distinct recitation, such as implies a certain *effort*

of the organs beyond that of mere ordinary speech, more generally used in early life, and continued as a habit or regular exercise, but especially by those whose chests are weak and who cannot sustain stronger exertions. Even singing may for the same reasons be allowed in many of such cases, but within much narrower limits and under much more cautious notice of the effects than would be requisite in reading. If such caution be duly used as to posture, articulation, and the avoidance of all excess, these regular exercises of the voice *may be rendered as salutary to the organs of respiration as they are agreeable in their influence on the ordinary voice.* The common course of education is much at fault in this respect. If some small part of the time given to crowding facts on the mind not yet prepared to receive or retain them, were employed in fashioning and improving the organs of speech under good tuition and with suitable subjects for recitation, both mind and body would often gain materially by the substitution.

“One or two remarkable cases are known to me where a constitutional tendency to asthma, shewing itself in early life, has been subdued to a great extent, and without ambiguity as to the effect, by thus tasking the chest in certain regulated efforts, of which recitation formed a part. However obscure the cause of this disorder, I doubt not that more might be done in prevention of its attacks by methods thus applied and sedulously cultivated

unintelligible gabble, by courtesy called 'reading aloud,' one hears in our schools, has been attempted to be accounted for by the practice of grouping the pupils so close to the teacher during the lesson that the lowest tones they employ are audible to him, while habit renders their imperfect enunciation comprehensible. I believe, however, that the true explanation lies in the entire ignorance of the master himself of the art which he professes to teach. To render him competent, there must be one first effort. That the humblest of our agricultural classes, even in Boeotian Somersetshire, may be taught to read perfectly well, was demonstrated by a clergyman I knew, (now, alas! no more,) the incumbent of a parish in that county. By his vigilant supervision and active help, he made his school a model institution, and one of the excellences consisted in the fact that he made the children read aloud, with the pure accent and correct pronunciation of highly educated persons. He was himself their instructor, and his plan was to read their lesson to them himself, sentence by sentence, causing them to read each sentence immediately after he had done so, and to imitate precisely his tone and enunciation."

To ensure a clear and distinct articulation, remember that while you adequately dwell upon the vowels in a word, you take especial care to give full effect to the consonants, simple and compound,

and more particularly those with which words begin and terminate. As a rule in speaking and reading, let the tongue float freely on a level with the lower teeth, as indeed (Mr. Kingsbury well observes) it may be seen to do in any one whose articulation is clear and high bred.

In this place, too, I may as well offer a few observations in reference to stops.

We are told in our very first grammars, that a comma requires us to stop while we count one to ourselves; a semicolon, two; a colon, three; and a full stop, four. Now I imagine very few persons strictly carry out these rules, and I think it would sound somewhat pedantic if we did. Most persons, I take it, from habit make *the sense of the passage* they are reading their guide in the pauses which they make; and I do not know, where the reader is an intelligent person, that a better guide can be offered them. Pauses also afford in their proper places good opportunities for renewing the supply of breath, but I am disposed to think, as a rule, unless the sentences be very long, it is as well to accustom yourselves to take in at the full stop a sufficient amount of air in the manner I have described, to carry you on without fatigue to the close of the next sentence; and you will find it a good plan to acquire the art of embracing as it were the whole length of a sentence at a glance, so that in this matter you may learn habitually to *economize* the breath, (as

I have before called it,) and so make the supply answer in proportion to the demand.

And now I think it is time that I should direct your attention to a most important point in the art of elocution, and one on which I am well aware much difference of opinion prevails, I mean that of *emphasis*. When we pronounce a particular syllable in a word with greater stress than we lay on the rest of the word, we are said, as we all know, to place the accent on such syllable. And so when we lay a greater stress upon one or more words in a sentence, we are said to lay the emphasis on such words. Emphatical words, as they are termed, have been defined to be those words in a sentence which carry a certain weight or importance in themselves, or those on which the sense of the rest depends; and these must always be distinguished by a fuller and stronger tone of voice wherever they are found, whether in the beginning, the middle, or the end of a sentence.

I give one or two instances of this now, by way of illustration<sup>a</sup>. I might give innumerable instances, indeed, to shew that emphasis properly placed is the very life and soul of a sentence,

<sup>a</sup> Certain selections from Milton and Shakespeare were here given. See the scene between King Henry the Fifth and Bates, Court and Williams, (Henry V., act iv. sc. 1,) as a most striking instance of the necessity of the emphasis being laid upon the proper nouns and pronouns.

but I will draw this lecture to a close by giving you an instance, and a very old one too, of the variety of meanings which may be given to one short commonplace question. I take this sentence of just six words, "Do you ride to Brighton to-day?" and you will see, according to the mode in which I lay the emphasis, I give the sentence no less than six different meanings. If I lay it on the first word, I seem to doubt the fact altogether; if on the second, the answer may be, "No, my *brother* goes instead;" if on the third, the answer may be, "No, I shall *walk*;" if on the fourth, the answer may be, "No, *from* the town;" if on the fifth, the answer may be, "No, to Shoreham;" if on the last, the answer may be, "No, but I shall to-morrow." Such is one rather amusing illustration of the extreme importance of placing the emphasis rightly and according to the sense in which it is required.

Before closing this lecture and leaving the subject we are now discussing, it is only right that I should tell you of a new view which has been taken regarding emphasis by a very able and acute clerical teacher of elocution, the Rev. W. W. Cazalet, in which I cannot say that I entirely concur. He would altogether do away with emphasis, and in its place substitute *pauses* after important words. But it is only right in arguing with an honourable opponent, that I should give you his exact words. Mr. Cazalet says: "The method of



delivery generally adopted is one based upon a system of emphasis. Now the effect of an emphasis on any one word is to weaken the force of the others. By making one word prominent, the full meaning is in a manner lost, for the whole sentence is important, not the mere word. Moreover, the emphasis must often be on parts of words, for it can only be given on one syllable and so weakens the power of the whole. The system of emphasis resolves itself into an effort to produce effect by accenting words which in reality have no more force than others in the same sentence. Hence it has become a monstrous abuse in delivery, for the speaker or reader, feeling that each word has a force or power, gives at length an emphasis on so many that all expression is lost. The effect upon the hearer is perhaps not so severely felt in speaking as in reading. But the sensation produced by emphasis on emphasis, is perhaps more wearisome even than monotony.

“Now the two principal causes of bad speaking and reading are monotony and emphasis. I have already shewn how monotony may be relieved. I now proceed to consider how emphasis may be avoided, and for this purpose it will be necessary to give my rules for delivery.

“My system is based on a theory of pauses, as entirely opposed to and disposing of emphasis. A pause on a word gives a point to that word on delivery, and the sentence that follows is made pro-

minent by the pause. A sentence therefore spoken or read with the full quality and continuous flow of the voice, and with the pause made in right places, will necessarily have all its force and meaning, and this without the least effort, which is the very essence of emphasis. An emphatic delivery is one continued straining after effect. My theory of pauses, on the contrary, necessarily divides each sentence into its component parts, and each pause in delivery, while giving point to its own phrase, necessarily brings that which follows into prominence. In the one case the individual aims at the effect; in the other the system itself produces it. The emphasis is, as a consequence, artificial, the pause natural; the inference is inevitable; the emphasis must yield to the pause as an element in delivery."

So far I have given you Mr. Cazalet's own words. He then proceeds to argue that the verb is always the principal word in a sentence, and should be marked by a pause after it.

Now I am far from undervaluing the importance of pauses in their proper places. I think their effect after any chief word, be it noun, verb, adjective or pronoun, most striking; and after any fine simile, noble metaphor, or other beautiful passage, a pause of some duration adds marvelously to the weight and power with which it falls on the ears of an audience, sinks into their hearts, and fixes itself in their memories. But I cannot

admit that pauses dispense altogether with emphasis, any more than I can admit that in music no notes or passages should be played *forte*, but all *legato* or *piano*.

I join heartily with any man who condemns the *abuses* to which emphasis is so often and so wrongly put; but I cannot go further than this. I am ready enough to admit that so long as nothing more is intended to be conveyed to the hearer by a sentence than the words which compose that sentence actually express, why of course, rightly to enforce its construction is, in point of fact, to enforce its meaning; but there is often very much more than this required. The reader has to suggest by the tone of voice, something which the author's words do not of themselves fully and sufficiently express; and then we usually lay—and I contend ought properly to lay—an emphasis on such words; and this emphasis has, I think, very correctly been defined as a variation from the usual manner of modulating a word, clause, or sentence, by which it is made to carry an oblique, referential, or allusive force. This I can explain more fully and in detail as we proceed with our course of practical instruction.

## LECTURE IV.

*Parenthesis.—Its definition, and how to give due effect to it in speaking or reading.—Other remarks and illustrations.—General summary of the most important principles of Elocution, to be observed in speaking or reading.—Position of the body, &c.—Pronunciation of vowels and consonants.—The ‘sound-wave.’—The art of reading effectively.—Great importance of manly sports and athletic exercises in the open air, in attaining power of voice and strengthening generally the speech-organs.—The Rev. Charles Kingsley.—How to read prose, blank-verse, and rhyme.—Dramatic poetry, its great value.—For what purposes especially.—Reading with truth and animation.—Gesture.—General remarks on gesture and action.—Concluding observations.*

**T**HE first point to which I shall direct your attention in this lecture is the *parenthesis*, its proper use, and the right mode of giving effect to it.

The parenthesis may be defined as a sentence within a sentence, or as a clause containing some necessary information introduced into the body of a sentence obliquely, and which may be omitted without injuring the grammatical construction. Great care should always be taken, in reading or speaking, to keep this minor sentence, if I may so term it, as clear and separate as possible, from the principal or major sentence in which it occurs. This is effected by adopting a somewhat lower tone of voice, and generally by a somewhat quicker rate of utterance. It is most essential, if you would

become good readers, that you should let your hearers as much know by your changed tone of utterance that you are giving effect to a *parenthesis*, as if they had the book before them and were reading it themselves. You must therefore practise reading aloud various sentences in which a parenthesis occurs, and acquire the art of lowering the voice, and beginning this minor sentence in a different pitch from that in which you were reading the principal sentence. I will give you one very simple, and though by no means novel, yet a very excellent method, by which I think you will easily and speedily acquire the art of properly pronouncing the *parenthesis*. Read the principal or major sentence as if you were reading to some one at the end of the room: then when you come to the *parenthesis*, read it as if you were addressing a companion by your side, and then, when you have finished the *parenthesis*, resume as before, and go on with the principal sentence, as if you were once more addressing your imaginary friend at the end of the room. I will shew you, as I have hitherto done, in my own person what I mean, and then you will afterwards endeavour to carry out my suggestions practically yourselves\*.

In the course of the instruction which I shall have from day to day to give you, there will be many minor points connected with the art of speaking and reading aloud effectively, that will

\* Various instances of sentences with a parenthesis read in this manner to the pupils.

yet demand our attention ; but I think it best to take these as opportunities occur in our periodical lessons of bringing them under your notice, and so practically, and I hope also permanently, fixing them in your memories.

Let me now, then, endeavour briefly to recapitulate the principal rules which I have given you for your guidance, and add a few more remarks, which I trust you will find in many ways serviceable to you in public and in private life.

At first, then, practise "reading aloud" standing; but whether you stand or sit while reading, remember that you hold the chest and body generally in an upright but free and unconstrained attitude: the head being held erectly, but easily, on the spinal column, or better still, I think, slightly but *very* slightly thrown back. By adopting this position the *trachea* will rise perpendicularly from the bronchial tubes, and so all the various speech-organs will have full play for the discharge of their various functions. It is a most important rule also that the lungs should be properly filled with air, the inspirations taken in the manner I have already fully explained to you, and at right intervals, and the supply of breath duly economized.

Remember also that while you give full value to the vowels in any syllable, you pay quite as much attention to the pronunciation of the consonants, especially those which begin and end a word. In

nine cases out of ten I am disposed to think that indistinctness in a reader or speaker may be traced to the neglect of this rule, particularly where two or more consonants come in succession.

Take care that in reading the voice is thrown outwards (if I may use the expression), so that the sound-waves float on to the remotest part of the church, hall, or room in which you are reading. In this way a skilful reader will render a mere whisper audible to the remotest listener, where another person reading or speaking in a voice ten times louder, but unacquainted with the elements of the art, will produce only noise and confusion.

Read *slowly*, and above all, read *naturally*. As soon as the eye *grasps* the words, look full at your audience, and pronounce them. It is in this power of the eye to grasp many words or even lines at once in a single glance that one of the secrets of effective reading chiefly consists. Of course practice is required to cultivate this to perfection, but you will be astonished and delighted to find how rapidly you will attain proficiency in this branch of the art by culture and experience; and at last you will be enabled with a single glance to seize not merely one or two *lines* of the work you are reading, but the general meaning of a whole sentence.

If you desire to mar the effect of the finest passages that were ever written, or to render the liveliest and most inspiring passages tame, flat,

dull, and dead, you have but to hold the book close before your face, never raise your eyes from it, and let the voice strike against the pages, and be reflected back to yourself, and you will succeed thoroughly in accomplishing your aim.

Bear in mind also that while there should be a continuous flow of sound during reading or speaking, the articulation should yet be perfectly distinct. This you will not fail to acquire if you remember what I said a few minutes ago, particularly as regards the pronunciation of those consonants with which words commence and terminate.

Develope also by practice the power which the lips have in the articulation of words. It is quite astonishing how, by a judicious exercise of the functions belonging to them, they may be made to compensate for the deficiencies of a naturally weak voice.

Bear in mind also that the practice of all kinds of manly sports and athletic exercises, especially in the open air, will tend most materially to strengthen the chest, improve the capacity of the lungs, and necessarily increase the power and fullness of the voice. In a word, be assured that whatever tends to give you bodily health and strength will also contribute most essentially to the free use and vigour of all the various speech-organs. In support of this I quote what Mr. Kingsley says in his admirable article, "The Irra-



tionale of Speech," ("Fraser's Magazine," July, 1859,) which, though more peculiarly applicable to persons suffering from impediments of speech, yet contains so much excellent counsel for all, that I gladly take this opportunity of giving it to you:—

"The stammerer needs above all men to keep up that *mentem sanam in corpore sano* which is now-a-days called, somewhat offensively, 'muscular Christianity,' a term worthy of a puling and enervated generation of thinkers, who prove their own unhealthiness by their contemptuous surprise at any praise of that health which ought to be the normal condition of the whole human race.

"But whosoever can afford an enervated body and an abject character, the stammerer cannot. With him it is a question of life and death. He must make a man of himself, or be liable to his tormentor to the last. . . .

"Let him eschew all which can weaken either nerves or digestion, all excesses, all intemperance in drink or in food. . . . Let him betake himself to all manly exercises, which will put him into wind and keep him in it. Let him, if he can, ride, and ride hard, remembering that (so does horse-exercise expand the lungs and oxygenate the blood) there has been at least one frightful stammerer ere now who spoke perfectly plainly as long as he was in the saddle. Let him play rackets and fives, row and box, for all these amuse-

ments strengthen those muscles of the chest and abdomen which are certain to be in his case weak. . . . And let him now, in these very days, join a rifle club, and learn in it to carry himself with the erect and noble port which is all but peculiar to the soldier, but ought to be the common habit of every man ; let him learn to march, and more, to trot under arms without losing breath, and by such means make himself an active, healthy, and valiant man.

“Meanwhile let him learn again the art of speaking, and having learnt, think before he speaks, and say his say calmly, with self-respect, as a man who does not talk at random, and has a right to a courteous answer. Let him fix in his mind that there is nothing on earth to be ashamed of save doing wrong, and no being to be feared save Almighty God, and so go on making the best of the body and soul which Heaven has given him.”

Remember, in reading prose, that the beauty of the author's style be duly rendered by the appropriate rise and fall of the voice, especially in sentences of any length, where the proper cadence of the voice, as you approach the end of the passage, will be found very striking, and will give it smoothness and polish.

Blank verse, especially, should be marked by the rhythm proper to it, and practice, under good tuition will soon enable you to acquire the art

of reading it naturally and yet at the same time musically. Many persons, when they see no stop at the end of the line in blank verse, run it, when reading rapidly, into the succeeding line, more rapidly often than they read any other part of the verse, and of course destroy all the rhythm and cadence which constitute its beauty. It is difficult to say which of the two extremes is the greater fault, that of ending every line with a pause, or that of running one line into another more rapidly than in reading ordinary prose. Avoid equally both errors, if you would have that measured march of the syllables heard in which the grandeur and beauty of blank verse ought essentially to consist.

In reading poetry, while you take care that the metre—the music of the verse—is fully conveyed to the hearer by the more marked cadence, the fuller and greater rise and fall of the voice, avoid, as ruin to the finest poem that ever was penned, degenerating into what I may term mere *sing-song*.

To those whose fault in reading is want of life and animation, I most earnestly recommend the practice of reading dialogues, conversational passages, and the most striking scenes from Shakespeare and Milton. Try to form, for instance, your own conceptions of one or more characters in the “Paradise Lost,” or in the historical plays of our great dramatist, and then read aloud the

passages in which such characters are introduced. As far as you can, then, sustain the individualities of such characters, and endeavour to convey to the hearer your own conceptions of them.

I wish to impress these last remarks upon your minds as earnestly as I can, because undoubtedly the golden rule to be observed for reading aloud effectually is to read with animation, and, *when the occasion demands it*, with a proper dramatic embodiment, by the tone of voice, modulation and expression, of the particular passion or emotion which you have to delineate. And by this let me beseech you to remember that I do *not* mean anything approaching, even in the smallest degree, to *theatrical exaggeration*. There is, however, the very widest difference imaginable between the conveyance of any particular emotion or sentiment to the minds of an audience by appropriate modulation and expression, and the rant of violent and noisy exaggeration.

It has been most truly remarked that a speaker, preacher, or reader, will affect his audience according to the degree in which he is affected, or seems to be affected, himself. There is a congenial sympathy, which, like an electric spark, darts from heart to heart. It will (as a writer<sup>b</sup> on the subject truly says) strike others more or less forcibly according to the impulse it receives from the speaker. He is the master-spirit which sets it

<sup>b</sup> Herries.

free: but how can that man transfuse the very life of the passions into the soul of others, while he himself remains unmoved, or but little affected? No, he must, he ought to feel in the most exquisite degree, every tender, every bold, every animated emotion. Then, and then only, will he be able to excite kindred feelings in the hearts of his audience. Many of our public addresses have a kind of freezing and benumbing influence, which is an antidote to animation. Their speeches may be compared to a waxen image, which has form, proportion, and ornament, but is destitute of life and motion. But there is an inborn fire of the soul that is the very life of eloquence, and this it is which, animating the strains of a masterly speaker, will force its way into the hearts of all.

I conclude now with a brief dissertation on a subject that is, I am well aware, rather difficult to explain merely by words; I mean that of gesture.

I cannot help thinking that many very minute and very absurd rules have been laid down in reference to the appropriate gesticulation which should be used by the speaker, preacher, or reader. I do not propose laying down under this head a chart for your guidance. Gestures have their determinate signification as well as words, and they can no more be misunderstood; the life and spirit of a discourse depend greatly upon these, and, what is more, its truth. After all, Hamlet's

advice to the players is about the best general set of rules in this respect which you can take for your guidance. Avoid all constrained action; let the arms, for instance, be moved from the shoulder, not from the elbow alone. What has been termed *referential* gesture is very effective, and may frequently be observed in our best speakers and preachers. It is that action by which the speaker carries the attention of his audience to any particular incident or event which is either in reality or imagination before him, as, for instance, in that noble passage in Professor Aytoun's "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers,"—the Execution of Montrose—where the great Marquis swears to the truth of his assertion:—

"By the bright St. Andrew's cross  
That waves above us there!"

the reader may with great propriety and effect point as if the banner of St. Andrew were actually waving before him. I quite agree with the well-known teacher of elocution, Mr. B. H. Smart, in this respect, when he says that if a picture of any kind is to be exhibited to the mental view, the speaker will convey a far more lively impression in proportion as he forms a clear and vivid idea of it himself, and by appropriate action refers consistently to its different parts, as if the scene were actually before the eyes of his auditors.

I think in a matter like that of gesture, where so much must at all times depend on the nature

and import of the subject on which you are speaking, and so much must depend on your own good sense and good taste, that I shall be of more real service to you if I tell you what to avoid, rather than pretend to give you an elaborate set of rules to be observed.

Remember, then, that oratorical action has been defined to be the just and elegant adaptation of gesture to the subject which we are discussing, and consequently all your movements, all your action, you should endeavour to make as significant as graceful. Avoid; then, all awkward habits, such as resting the chief weight of the body first on one foot, then on the other; swinging backwards and forwards or from side to side; jerking forward the upper part of the body on every emphatic word, keeping the elbows pinioned to the side, and moving the arms only from the elbows; or "sawing the air" (as Hamlet says) with an unvaried and ungraceful motion. I am sure we have but to enter our churches, houses of parliament, and popular meetings, to see but too many specimens of all these faults in gesticulation, to say nothing of contortions of countenance. "Pray you avoid them."

Until we come to actual practical instruction on this point, I can only repeat what I have in substance said before. Stand like a man, firmly and with head erect; look your audience calmly and steadily in the face; know well what you are going

to say, and say it; *feel* your subject yourself, and the action will come; let the hands and arms move freely and easily, and without any constrained angular action, remembering that the right hand is essentially the instrument of action, and that the left should be used in subordination to it.

Economize your action as I have already told you to economize your breath. Do not *waste* gesture. Adapt the general style and manner of your action to the subject, the place, and the occasion; and reserve the boldest and most striking gestures for those parts of your address in which occur the boldest thoughts and the most striking language. Lastly, avoid anything that approaches affectation or effeminacy in voice, action, or appearance. Be *earnest*, be *manly*, be *natural*.

It has, however, been most truly remarked by the writer of a very excellent recent work on the art of speaking<sup>c</sup>, that since experience tells us that the more many men strive by themselves to attain to a *natural* mode of reading, the more glaringly absurd and painfully ludicrous does their imitative style often become, the practical question arises, "Where is a man to seek the requisite assistance?" Under the existing state of things, if he feels his own deficiencies and seeks for the requisite aid, the chances are greatly in favour of his falling into the hands of a mere

<sup>c</sup> The Speaker at Home, by the Rev. J. Halcombe. London: Bell and Daldy.



*charlatan* ; and as *quack* remedies are proverbially dangerous, he will be fortunate if his former defects are not made more glaring, and perhaps finally incurable. Until this matter is taken up by the Universities, upon whom the education of all classes directly or indirectly depends, very little can be done.

In this last remark I cordially concur, and as I said in substance at the first, so now I say again in conclusion, I trust the time will soon arrive when not merely Oxford and Cambridge, but all great collegiate establishments in this kingdom, will have among their staff a recognised Professorship of Elocution.

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#### ERRATA.

Page 20, line 5, and p. 25, line 11, *for* Azermak *read* Czermak \*.  
 — 47, line 3, *for* Kingsbury *read* Kingsley.

\* In reference to Czermak's *laryngoscope*, I am informed by a medical friend that the merit of the invention is claimed by Türk. However, a mirror of a somewhat similar construction was used by Garcia, and earlier still by Liston.

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